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SUBJECT: DATE SET FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUREAU ELECTION

¶1. (U) The National Assembly has set April 17 as the date for elections of a new Executive Directorate ("Bureau" in French). The elections, to be managed by an ad hoc working group under the supervision of the outgoing Executive Directorate, will determine a successor to National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe and the six other Directorate members. Debate between deputies over the form of the elections has dominated the National Assembly's agenda since Kamerhe's March 25 resignation. Majority alliance AMP hard-liners claimed that Kamerhe had lost AMP confidence and thus should not exercise control as caretaker President over the process to choose his successor, while opposition and moderate AMP members did not object to Kamerhe's supervisory role.

¶2. (U) In a compromise resolution adopted April 7, the National Assembly established a 13-member election technical working group ("groupe technique de travail" in French). In accordance with the resolution, parliamentary groups (nine from the majority and four from the opposition) may designate one member to the working group. The nominations are subject to approval by Kamerhe. The main function of the working group is to receive and post candidacies and transmit the results of the elections to the outgoing Directorate.

¶3. (U) The resolution establishes a calendar for the elections:

- Individual candidacies will be received by the working group April 11 and posted April 14;
- Candidates will be permitted to campaign April 15-16;
- The elections will be held and results announced on April 17;
- The new Directorate will be seated April 20.

The resolution stipulates that candidates for the Executive Directorate must submit to the working group a letter indicating their candidacy and a letter from their party endorsing their candidacy.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The modalities established to choose a successor to Kamerhe are more transparent, inclusive and tolerant of Kamerhe than many observers had anticipated. The creation of a multi-party working group to organize and implement the elections is clearly a compromise designed to avoid a continuation of the power struggle between pro-Kamerhe and anti-Kamerhe groups in the National Assembly. There is no clear front runner to replace Kamerhe, although PPRD Secretary General Evariste Boshab is reported to have the backing of President Joseph Kabila. The outcome will depend on the willingness of AMP deputies, some of whom have demonstrated independence from their party's leadership in supporting an important role for Kamerhe in the election process, to unify behind the candidates endorsed by Kabila and the PPRD. End Comment.

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